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SECTION: Financial**LENGTH:** 628 words**HEADLINE:** Drive launched to back California aerospace business**BYLINE:** BY DAVE McNARY UPI Business Writer**DATELINE:** LOS ANGELES**BODY:**

A coalition of business executives, backed by Gov. Pete Wilson, charged Thursday that the state's congressional delegation has failed to take action to keep aerospace companies in California.

"There has been a lack of pro-active action to protect the state's aerospace industry," said **Ron Cedillos**, head of the new group, called Californians for Aerospace Leadership. "The delegation's actions have not been collective, cohesive or effective."

A recent study by management consultants McKinsey & Co. said California has lost 60,000 aerospace jobs during the past four years, falling to about 485,000 positions.

The study said California's share of defense jobs -- still by far the highest in the nation -- has dropped to 18.6 percent from 23 percent in 1986.

California was hit hard last year by aerospace defections as Lockheed Corp. decided to move most of its major aircraft production from Burbank to Georgia, where costs of doing business are lower.

In a major loss of potential jobs this spring, the Air Force announced it would award the development contract for the Advanced Tactical Fighter plane to Lockheed instead of Northrop Corp., which would have built the plane in California.

McDonnell Douglas Corp. also announced recently that it will build its new MD-12X commercial tri-jet outside California.

"What oil is to Texas, aerospace is to California," said Cedillos, president of a Long Beach firm that performs testing for the industry.

Cedillos, speaking at a news conference at the Museum of Science and Industry, said the group will pressure California's elected officials to support such California-based projects as the Space Station Freedom project and Northrop's controversial B-2 "stealth" bomber.

Both these programs have been widely criticized as being unnecessary and excessively costly. The B-2, designed to fly into enemy territory undetected, has a price tag of more than \$800 million each.

Cedillos refused to discuss the validity of these programs. Instead, he criticized the state's congressional delegation for failing to strongly support the defense industry and said his group would publicize the voting records of the delegation's members on defense projects.

"All past transgressions are forgiven," Cedillos said. But he subsequently criticized two Democratic members of the House of Representatives -- Barbara Boxer of San Rafael and Ronald Dellums of Oakland -- for their lack of support.